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SUBJECT Terrorism in the Middle East

DAVID HARTMAN: To combat terrorist in the Middle East, America must, among other things, of course, have good intelligence.

William Colby, former Director of the CIA, is now a partner in the international consulting firm of Colby, Bailey, Warner & Associates. Allan Goodman is Associate Dean at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. And he served in several senior staff positions at the CIA. And both are in Washington this morning.

Mr. Colby, start us off. We heard former President Bani-Sadr of Iran say that he had information to indicate that, you know, attacks were imminent on the United States of some kind. To what extent should our intelligence community had been able to pick up on this and do something about it?

WILLIAM COLBY: I don't think that single report says very much. The easiest thing after an attack is to find the one report that said it was going to happen and separate it from the 50 others that say 50 other things are going to happen. This is typical political exploitation of an action by a political figure wanting to make a point of it.

The problem about intelligence is to separate the wheat from the chaff and to focus in on the dangers.

I don't think there's any news that the Amal Shiites were opposed to us and quite willing to use violence against us. That's very different from having a tip that they're actually going to take a certain airliner at a certain airport.

HARTMAN: Mr. Goodman, your reaction to Mr. Bani-Sadr?

ALLAN GOODMAN: Well, I believe it's much too early to tell the reliability of that report or its significance. But it does illustrate the difficulty that intelligence faces in verifying reports as general as the one he described to us and putting enough resources at the problem to convert that general report into an actual warning that policymakers can take action on.

HARTMAN: Mr. Colby, Secretary of State Shultz said yesterday intelligence is good but it needs to be a lot better. We have to do more to combat terrorism. What can we do?

COLBY: Well, I think that, clearly, it's always you want it to be better. But you're not going to send a blonde young American to infiltrate a Shiite Moslem group. You've got to find people in that community or around that community who will tell you what's going on.

It's very difficult to get the specific plans of a specific terrorist action. But you can get the general warning, which improves your protection devices, your security systems. And that was what caused the attack on the plane, was a failure of the security measures.

HARTMAN: How good is our system now, and how need it be made better? I mean our system at the moment, Mr. Colby.

COLBY: Well, I think our system is really very good. If you think that the purpose of intelligence is to gather all the little bits and pieces of jigsaw together and then arrange them on a table -- and you don't have all the pieces, by a long shot. But you try then to divine what the overall picture is from those bits and pieces, and discard the ones that don't relate. Now, that's a tough job.

We have some very experienced analysts who do this all day long. They take all the information. It isn't just a matter of having a single spy to give you the answer. It's adding all the bits and pieces to give you an understanding of the purposes, the motives, the identities, the locations of terrorist groups of this nature.

HARTMAN: Mr. Goodman, how good are we at it right now, and what do we need to do to make it better?

GOODMAN: I disagree...

HARTMAN: To combat terrorism.

GOODMAN: I disagree with Bill some because I think

there are some fundamental flaws now in the intelligence community relating to its organization and particularly the coordination among its members. But if I could do one thing to improve our intelligence with respect to international terrorism, it would be to improve our international cooperation among intelligence services and the sharing of data and the sharing of information and the sharing of analytical resources, because this is a global problem requiring a global response.

HARTMAN: All right. But how realistic is it to think that countries are going to share that kind of information that would leave them open to having, you know, people -- their own intelligence people uncovered?

GOODMAN: I think that's a good concern. But I also think the lesson of 847 and this recent upsurge of terrorist activities is that we are going to have to find a way to make that sharing possible without endangering the other functions of our intelligence services. That's why I favor the creation of a new international anti-terror intelligence agency that will permit countries to share information that way without fear of how it will affect sources and methods of other types of intelligence.

HARTMAN: Mr. Colby, to what extent do you agree or disagree?

COLBY: Well, I agree with the idea of sharing information. We do a great deal of that on terrorism. But, for example, the experience in sharing our intelligence in NATO indicates that there are very substantial leaks occur if you get a 15-nation alliance and begin to pour intelligence into it. So you do have a problem of protecting your sources.

Nonetheless, you can share a great deal, and we do share a great deal. We benefit from the intelligence services of many countries who contribute their knowledge of the identities of some of these terrorists so that we can pick them up as they cross borders.

HARTMAN: Mr. Colby, just very briefly, in 20 seconds, how useful is all this public discussion, including this conversation we're having right now?

COLBY: Well, I think if we put some effort to clarify what intelligence is all about, it is useful. If we just stress the hype, then it isn't very.

HARTMAN: Mr. Colby and Mr. Goodman, thank you, gentlemen, for joining us.